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The Accepted Time

IN REJECTING the amendment to the naval appropriations bill authorizing the President to invite Great Britain and Japan into a conference on disarmament, the House of Representatives acted under the leading of the administration. We have definitely gone on record against a policy demanded by the masses of the American people today and one of pre-eminent importance to anything like a "return to normalcy" in this country, as in Europe.

True, both President Harding and Mr. Mondell, the Republican floor leader, failed to meet the issue directly. The first declared that with the world's atmosphere filled with war disturbance the time was "not propitious" to take up disarmament, while Mr. Mondell explained that the matter was only postponed to a "more opportune" time.

The House amendment did not call for disarmament by the United States "first," that is, before Great Britain or Japan should disarm. It simply called for the convening of representatives of the three great naval powers to talk the matter over and see if some plan could not be arranged by mutual agreement for a let-up in the present calamitous competitive naval building programs.

Are we already so possessed by militarism that we are afraid even to suggest a calm reasoning together of the nations on a problem of such paramount importance?

Perhaps the President would have the people believe that he looks forward to a good time coming which will be propitious for disarmament. What time could be more propitious than the present for a bold American initiative in the right direction? Largely as a result of the continued piling up of our already intolerable tax burdens, some five millions of men are out of work today. Factories are idle and thousands of business concerns the country over are struggling desperately to avoid going over the edge of bankruptcy. Strikes and industrial chaos are threatened at every turn. Does the President realize that an anti-disarmament policy shuts off the last ray of hope of speedy emergence from these conditions through such a lightening of the tax burden involved in annual national government expenditures of from five to six billions of dollars, of which nearly 93 per cent goes for past wars and for wars that may never come?

War clouds in Europe, Mr. Harding apparently would have us understand, are his sufficient reasons for pigeon-holing any suggestion looking to a conference on disarmament. These very conditions proclaim the present to be the right psychological time for a check to the war spirit. Is the President so befuddled by the "arguments" of war profiteers and armament contractors, floaters of bond issues, professional militarists, and the fishers in troubled waters generally that he cannot realize the fact that to him is now given the high power and privilege of sounding the clear trumpet-call that would disperse all these clouds and inspire the world with new and brighter hope? Can anything be more certain than that war-exhausted and debt-burdened Europe would gladly welcome a statesmanlike lead from the United States in the present world crisis?

Now is the accepted time. Speak up, Mr. President!

The Trouble in Silesia

AGAIN the Allies are contemptuously defied by a freebooter of a nation which its armies fought to save and strengthen. Korfanty follows the example of the swashbuckler D'Annunzio. Acting ostensibly against the authority of the constitutional government of the Polish Republic, this Polish brigand has marched

on Upper Silesia at the head of an armed band with the avowed object of seizing that province for Poland, as D'Annunzio seized Fiume for Italy.

What are the forces behind Korfanty? Are they the same as those that backed the Jew, D'Annunzio? Korfanty's desperate invasion of Upper Silesia may lack some of the elements of the picturesque and the romantic that flavored the "poet-warrior's" adventure. But it resembles that event in its utterly contemptuous flouting of solemn national agreements, and in its piratical disdain for even a color of decent regard for the opinion of mankind. His attitude is that which the Bolsheviks have exemplified in Russia in so, transcendent a degree.

In the recent plebiscite a majority of all the voters of the province declared for remaining under the German flag. But, under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the final decision remains with the supreme council, which, at the moment of Korfanty's filibustering raid, had under consideration a settlement that would, as a matter of fairness, take into account the preferences expressed by local districts along the lines of proportional representation allotting only those preponderantly German to Germany. Without waiting for the announcement of this decision, and probably roused to anger by the German suggestion that their efforts to pay reparations should not be crippled by a further deprivation of raw materials needed in their industries, Korfanty, who was formerly plebiscite commissioner for the district, ruthlessly betrays the confidence reposed in him by the Allies and resorts to armed invasion and terrorism.

Coming just at the most critical moment of the reparations negotiations, this Korfanty raid further complicates the entire European situation in such a way that the world is menaced with a renewal of all the horrors of the World War on an intensified scale. Premier Briand has notified Berlin that France would regard the dispatch of German troops into Upper Silesia as a violation of the Versailles Treaty. France has her eye on the rich coal lands in the districts that voted German and prefers to have them Polish rather than German, having recently concluded a treaty with Poland that constitutes a close military and economic alliance between the two countries.

The Allied forces in the plebiscite area proved totally inadequate to repel the invader. As far as the French command is concerned, it is doubtful if they even desired to repel him. With or without Allied aid, Germany could, if permitted, easily have settled his hash. What is immensely suggestive to Americans is the vivid resurgence of European imperialism in the whole incident and the callous and cavalier dismissal of every consideration save that of—coal!

In the nick of time, the United States resumes her seat in the supreme council of the Allies in the person of George Harvey, Mr. Harding's Ambassador to England. It is an irony of fate that a man chiefly known for his vitriolic abuse of Wilson and the Wilson ideals should now have the determining vote in consigning to the scrap-heap the League of Nations and so dashing the hopes of the peoples of Europe and America that it might be made over into an effective instrument for the maintenance of world peace.

Stop and Think!

IN WORDS whose wisdom is proved by their vitality, old Marcus Aurelius says: "Give thyself time to learn something new and good each day, and cease to be whirled around." Plainly, human nature remains pretty much the same down through the ages. Yet it is likely that in this our day no counsel is more to the point of human need than this of the old Roman.

The only life worthy of the name is that which proves itself in growth. Man, like every other form of life, must go forward to larger and better expression, or fall backward into stagnation and death. There is no middle course. The tree is known by its fruits. Any of us may this hour apply the simple test that determines whether we are really living or dying. It is the test of growth; the test of growth in production.

The trouble is that our age is prone to mistake motion for progress. Whirling rapidly like a squirrel in a cage, it flatters itself that it is doing something. Or what is worse, perhaps, it lacks even desire for a definite goal. Like the child on a merry-go-round, it seeks movement rather than destination. There is enough lost motion in the world every day to run a thousand factories for a year. We fail to achieve that concentration so absolutely essential to the "learning of something new and worth while" which marks the functioning of the creative mind in discovery, invention and production, because we fail to be still and think long enough to determine direction and destination. In the dizzy whirl to which we surrender, like a dog running after an automobile, we imagine that although we do not know where we are going we are somehow "on the way." The question is, on the way to what?

Workingmen's Homes

ONE of these days we may find that we have quite as much to learn from our Latin-American neighbors as we now fondly imagine they have to learn from us. Here, for instance, is a news dispatch announcing that, in an effort to relieve the housing shortage in Rio de Janeiro, the authorities have revived an almost forgotten law dating from the days of the wise and good Dom Pedro. Under this law, the homes of all workingmen are exempt from taxation.

Such a law should interest Americans just now. It would be certain to give a decided stimulus to building. If incidentally this exemption should disarm the rent brigand, the measure would not suffer in popularity. Such an exemption would certainly be in the direction of an approach to economic justice. On this account it would greatly strengthen all the forces of law and order and stall the Bolsheviks. What could be more unfair than the present system of taxing the humble cottage of the wage-earner (built out of the savings of long years of hard labor, or being paid for perhaps with heavy interest out of wages in monthly installments), at the same rate as the city palace or the lordly country seat of the millionaire?

The exemption need not necessarily involve a loss of needed public revenue. The tax might well be shifted to the mansions and pleasure-houses of the rich. No particular harm would be done if such an encouragement to thrift and a permanent settling down of the workers were accompanied by a discouragement of the wanton and flagrant luxury in which observers like Sir Philip Gibbs sees one of the greatest present dangers to American democracy. It is possible that the great end in view might be more perfectly attained by a tax absorbing for the benefit of all the people the unearned increment of land values. Still there is time-honored sanction for the wisdom of taking the half-loaf while waiting for the whole. Or must the United States of America lag behind the United States of Brazil in the adoption of practical measures for the relief of house shortage?

Stock Jobbing Versus Service

THERE is a flat contradiction between the respective statements of the railway managers and the railwaymen's unions made before the Federal Wage Labor Board in connection with the demand of the railroad officials for the abrogation of the national wage agreement. Each side has put forward "experts" who have testified on the one hand that unless a reduction in wages of from 15 to 25 per cent is allowed to go into effect, the roads will be unable to carry on, owing to the pressing need for heavy outlays for repairs and renewals. On the other hand, the men's representatives have challenged these statements of fact and furnished figures tending to show that very large economies might be effected in administrative expenses and otherwise which, without touching wage-schedules, would permit the roads to be placed in a state of efficiency and operated at a profit.

In a weekly market letter sent out by a prominent Wall Street brokerage firm, and which is being reprinted widely in the labor press, the statement is made broadly that heads of the great railway systems reflect confidence in the upward trend of railway securities, "because they know all the ins and outs of the situation." Just as soon as a wage reduction is decided on, declares this bond house, the whole railroad outlook will take on a very different aspect, because the roads are not and never have been so badly off as the people have been led to believe. It is even pointed out that "only by making the items of expenditures for maintenance appear extremely large could the expense accounts show such a decided increase as is denoted in the monthly reports."

It is of vital interest to the American people that the whole matter of our national transportation be lifted out of the mud of such slang-whanging between selfish interests. The truth should be ascertained by a competent commission free from either the corporation or the trade-union bias.

Are railway managers more concerned with the juggling of values in Wall Street than with the economical and efficient administration of the properties that have been turned back to them by the government? Are the railwaymen's unions justified in their resistance to the proposed wage reductions? These are plain questions of fact that it should not be difficult to settle. If the commission of inquiry were headed by Secretary Hoover, its findings would be very apt to command the confidence of the American people as a whole.

Certain it is that some solution of the transportation problem must be found that will make impossible anything like a repetition of the notorious playing of battledore and shuttlecock with the roads of which the Erie, the Rock Island and the New Haven road scandals are the crying historical examples.